

WASHINGTON STATE

JUN 12 1967

A BOOK FOR TODAY

# Kennedy's Foreign Policy

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

**TO MOVE A NATION:** The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy. By Roger Hilsman. Doubleday. 602 pages. \$6.95.

Roger Hilsman served in John F. Kennedy's State Department, first as director of intelligence and research, and later as assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs. Like many other Kennedy appointees, Hilsman still regards those days as a never-to-be-repeated era in American history. As for Kennedy's own place in history, "John F. Kennedy was a leader. And he was a hero as well," Hilsman writes as the final two sentences in this overly-long, somewhat repetitious book.

His adoration for Kennedy has inhibited Hilsman from making this book a really incisive one. His second-echelon job in the State Department prevented him from writing about the whole sweep of Kennedy's foreign policy. For instance, Hilsman obviously had little to do with Soviet-American relations, and the book says little about the Berlin crisis which colored much of U.S. foreign policy during Kennedy's administration. Nor is there anything about the history of the nuclear test ban talks—that finally resulted in the partial test ban treaty of 1963. And because of his distance from Soviet-American relations, Hilsman continually talks a bit naively about the "growing detente" that he saw developing between Moscow and Washington.

He seems to feel that if it were not for Vietnam a solid detente would have been achieved between the United States and Russia. He may be right, of course but this reviewer at least remembers that the whole year of 1964 passed by without any significant improvement in Soviet-American relations.



—Harris & Ewing

ROGER HILSMAN

But if Hilsman says little about Berlin or East-West relations, he does have some very valuable—much of it fresh—information on the inner policy debates that took place within the Kennedy administration. He provides us with little we did not know already about the Cuban missile crisis, but he does have useful insights on how the administration's great crusade to crush Katanga caused severe political and diplomatic problems within the government.

As a former director of the State Department's intelligence branch, Hilsman worked closely with the Central Intelligence Agency, and his evaluation of the CIA seems fair. His main criticism of the CIA was that it was literally too competent; with so

many men, so much money, the CIA always was looking for new things to do.

It is Vietnam, though, that should provide the most interest for the reader. If you've been reading everything written on the subject, then there will be little new. But for the majority of people, Hilsman's book is a key to understanding the 1962-63 period, and in particular, the events leading up to the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother.

Hilsman played an important role in U.S. policy-making in that period, and it is clear from his book that he supported the anti-Diem view prevalent in many official circles. Hilsman also was primarily responsible for the now famous Aug. 24, 1963 cable to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge supporting efforts to overthrow Diem. A dispute still is waged whether Hilsman got sufficient high level clearances before sending the cable. He says in his book he did.

Hilsman, since leaving office, has spoken many times against U.S. policy toward Vietnam, arguing particularly that the Johnson administration has taken the "military path" and that the bombing of North Vietnam is wrong. He advocates instead, a stepped-up counter-guerrilla activity, and more efforts for a political settlement.

His book, toward the end, becomes a polemic in opposition to Vietnam policy; although he is entitled to his views, they seem to mar his book's overall historic merits.